

May 2003

## INTERIM DISTRIBUTION CERTIFICATE RENEWAL

Interim distribution certificates expire January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 and can be renewed once starting in July, 2003. This will be the first group of operators to renew their certificates with a continuing education contact hour requirement.

### **Interim renewal facts...**

Interim distribution certificates are valid until December 31, 2003 and the renewal period is July 1, 2003 – September 1, 2003. To avoid late fees, the renewal must be postmarked on or before September 1, 2003.

The first interim renewal notice will be sent to water systems in June 2003.

The water system that originally obtained the interim certificate can renew the certificate, not individual operators.

Continuing education, (CE) contact hours will be required for interim renewal.

Water systems may renew all or part of their interim certificates. Interim certificates that are not renewed are valid until December 31, 2003 but will be suspended on January 2, 2004.

If a water system intends to renew an operator's certificate but that operator does not yet have the required continuing education, the water system can avoid late fees by paying the renewal fee by the September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. The operator will then have until December 31, 2003 to meet the CE requirement in order to avoid suspension.

Only water systems that have not received any notice of violation, citation, or order from the Department or EPA since January 1, 2001 can renew their interim certificates unless the water system can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Department that the violation was not the result of actions taken or not taken by the operator(s).

Continuing education, (CE), contact hours and a renewal fee are required to renew an interim certificate according to the following table.

<i>Distribution Operators</i>	<i>Contact Hours</i>	<i>Renewal Fee</i>	<i>Discount Fee (certified in both Interim Distribution and Water Treatment)</i>
Grade D1	12	\$70	\$55
Grade D2	16	\$80	\$60
Grade D3	24	\$120	\$90
Grade D4	36	\$140	\$105
Grade D5	36	\$140	\$105

In order to renew an interim certificate the water system must submit a renewal application that includes the following for each interim operator;

- (1) The operator's name, social security number, current mailing address, certificate grade, and certificate number.
- (2) Payment of the renewal fee.
- (3) Documentation of continuing education contact hours.

Interim certificates can only be renewed once for an additional three-year period ending on December 31, 2006. After that date all interim certificates are invalid. Operators holding an interim certificate must achieve certification through the exam process in order to continue being certified as a distribution operator.

### **Interim Renewal Timeline**

June, 2003 – The Department will send out renewal notices to water systems that employ interim distribution operators. The notice will include instructions on the renewal process and a renewal form for each interim operator eligible for renewal.

July 1, 2003 – September 1, 2003 – Renewal period for Interim certificates. Water systems renew their interim operator certificates without late fees by submitting the renewal package to the Department postmarked on or before September 1, 2003.

September 2, 2003 – November 18, 2003 - \$50 late fee applies to all interim renewals that are not postmarked by September 1, 2003.

November 19, 2003 – December 31, 2004 - \$100 late fee applies to all interim renewals that are not postmarked by November 18, 2003.

January 1, 2004 – Expiration date of current interim water distribution certificates.

January 2, 2004

- Interim certificates that are not renewed because the renewal fee was not submitted will be suspended for one year. During this period the suspension can be lifted and the certificate renewed by paying the renewal fee with the \$100 late fee.
- Interim certificates that are not renewed due to insufficient or unacceptable CE contact hours will be suspended for six months. During this period the suspension can be lifted and the certificate renewed by submitting the required CE contact hours and paying the \$100 late fee.

July 1, 2004 – Interim certificates that were not renewed due to insufficient or unacceptable CE contact hours will be revoked and cannot be renewed.

January 2, 2005 – Interim certificates that were not renewed because the renewal fee was not paid will be revoked and cannot be renewed.

January 1, 2007 – All interim certificates are invalid.

### **Frequently Asked Questions about interim renewal**

**Some of my operators have met the continuing education requirement and some haven't, what should I do?**

Send in the renewal application package and include the renewal forms and fees for all your interim operators before the September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. We will complete the renewal process for those operators who have met the continuing education requirement. Those operators who have not completed continuing education will have until December 31, 2003 to send in the continuing education hours to avoid suspension of their certificate. Late fees will apply to interim renewal packages postmarked after September 1, 2003.

**We received an interim certificate for our Chief Operator but he will retire soon. Can I renew the interim certificate for the new chief operator?**

No. The interim certificate is specific to the water system and the operator. Once that operator leaves your system the interim certificate is no longer valid.

**One of my operators holds a regular D1 certificate and an interim D2 certificate. Do I need to renew the interim D2 if he is already certified as a D1 operator?**

Only if he needs to be certified at the D2 level because he is a chief or shift operator. A D1 operator can perform any duty a D2 operator can perform except be the chief or shift operator at a D2 or D3 system.

**One of my operators holds a D2 and an interim D4 certificate but no water treatment certificate. Does she qualify for the renewal discount?**

No. In order to qualify for the multiple certificate discount an operator must hold both a water treatment certificate and a distribution certificate.

**What happens if an operator's interim certificate is not renewed?**

Interim distribution certificates are valid until December 31, 2003. If a water system does not renew an operator's interim distribution certificate that operator is still a certified operator until that date. In January 2004 the certificate will be suspended.

**Can I get interim certification for my new operators or upgrade my current certificates?**

No. The application deadline for interim certification has past. You can only renew interim certificates that your operators already hold at the same grade as the original certificates.

**One of our current operators received interim certification from another water system. Can I renew his certificate for our system?**

No. One requirement of interim certification is that the operator was working at your system on December 31, 2000, before the new regulations were in effect.

**Some of my interim operators hold interim certification for several water systems. Do they need to pay a renewal fee for each water system?**

No. An operator can hold interim certificates for multiple systems if all the systems are owned by one entity and that operator has been working as a distribution operator for those water systems since before the regulation went into effect. The renewal fee should only be paid once.

**Should I send in copies of "certificates of completion" for continuing education contact hours that my operators have received?**

Yes, if the certificate contains all the required information for verification, (see below), it will be acceptable.

## **Information about Continuing Education Contact Hours**

**A CE course must meet all of the following standards in order to be accepted as a contact hour for renewal purposes.**

- 1. The course, class, seminar, or presentation must be at least one hour long.**

The regulations define one contact hour as “not less than 50 minutes of specialized training or a continuing education course”. Separate meetings lasting less than one hour cannot be added together to meet the minimum time requirement.

**2. The subject matter must be specific to water treatment or distribution.**

A course that presents information on a general subject that is not specific to the water industry would not be acceptable as continuing education. A course that addresses that subject as it applies to the drinking water industry would be acceptable.

**3. The course, class, seminar or presentation must be taken within the current renewal period.**

Courses taken after January 1, 2001 are within the current renewal period for all interim certificates.

**4. The course, class, seminar or presentation must be verifiable.** In order to receive credit for a continuing education contact hour the operator must provide the following information to allow the Operator Certification unit to verify the course. Verification is the process of ensuring the CE contact hours meet the standards and the operator’s attendance was recorded.

***It is important to note that contact hours that cannot be verified will not be accepted!***

**Where can I go to get Continuing Education contact hours?**

There are several sources for CE contact hours available. Presentations at industry conferences or meetings, correspondence courses, college courses, and Internet courses can all be acceptable. A water utility can offer CE contact hours as long as the training offered meet the CE requirements listed below. A list of CE providers is available on our website at [www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ddwem/technical/certification/opcert.html](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ddwem/technical/certification/opcert.html).

**What is a “CE provider”?**

A CE provider is any company, organization, or trainer that provides a presentation that transmits information related to the operation of a treatment facility and/or distribution system. The CE provider must also document and verify the training.

**What must a water utility do to offer CE contact hours that are verifiable?**

1. Arrange for an employee or outside speaker to conduct a training class.
2. Track attendance with a sign-in / sign-out sheet during the class.
3. Archive the following information for verification purposes;
  - a. Title of course
  - b. Instructor
  - c. Sign-in/sign-out sheet
  - d. Number of contact hours offered
  - e. Training material or hand-outs, (an explanation of the subject matter)
  - f. Location of training
  - g. Date of training
  - h. Contact information of CE Provider. This could be anybody in the water utility that has access to the archived file.
4. Provide the above-mentioned information to each operator who attended the training.

If a water utility conducts in-house training the water utility would be considered the CE provider for the training they provide.

**If my water utility sends me to a conference for training can they verify my CE hours?**

No. The operators' employer or water utility cannot verify contact hours given by another agency, organization or outside training source. The actual CE provider in this case would be the organization that put on the conference, not the water utility.

**How do I know if a CE provider will verify this information for me?**

Since we will not be contacting the operator for verification it is important that you can be sure your contact hours will be verified. A good way to do this is to ask these questions about a course or seminar you are considering or have already taken;

- ✓ Does the CE provider offer contact hours?

An organization will usually advertise the fact that contact hours are available. This usually means the organization is familiar with the concept of continuing education contact hours and is willing to provide the required documentation.

- ✓ Does the CE provider require that you sign-in and sign-out to verify attendance?

The simplest way to verify attendance is to have an operator sign-in when the class or seminar begins and sign-out when it ends. Other means may also be acceptable but some kind of record of attendance must be kept or the CE provider will not be able to verify your attendance.

- ✓ Does the CE provider offer the attendee the information required by the Operator Certification Unit for certification renewal?

**How does the Operator Certification Unit verify contact hours?**

We use the information provided to us by the operator to contact the CE provider. The CE provider must be able to tell us what subject matter was taught, when and where the operator attended the course and how many contact hours were provided. An operator cannot verify his or her own attendance.

**What will happen if I do not have enough contact hours to meet the renewal requirements?**

If you do not meet the CE contact hour requirement for your certificate it cannot be renewed and will be suspended on the expiration date. Remember, certificate renewals are due between four and six months before your certificate expires. If you send in your renewal and find out you do not have enough acceptable hours you still have until the expiration date to get those contact hours before your certificate is suspended.